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ABSTRACT

Project RECURSO, a federally-funded project in its third year of operation, attempted to improve: (1) assessment procedures for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students with handicapping conditions; (2) the skills of teachers and school-based support team members (SBSTs) who work with this population; and (3) the quality of interaction between these children's parents and their schools. The project provided inservice training to 410 SBSTs and 135 teachers serving 308 elementary students in 15 schools. Two teacher trainers provided classroom teachers with individual and group training in effective bilingual education techniques. SBSTs were familiarized with new tools and strategies for assessing LEP special education students. A series of regional parent workshops familiarized parents with the policies and procedures of the city's Division of Special Education and taught them how to help their children learn. Participating students showed significant gains in their English language skills, but did not meet program objectives in native language skills. Objectives were met in mathematics and social studies instruction, but not in science. Objectives were met in staff development, but not in identifying or developing assessment instruments. Evaluation of the parental involvement segment was not possible, and the program served fewer students but more staff members than the year before. (Author/MSE)

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OREA Report

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

PROJECT RECURSO
1987-1988

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EVALUATION SECTION
John E. Schoener, Chief Administrator
June 1989

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

PROJECT RECURSO
1987-1988

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5/22/89

PROJECT RECURSO*
1987-88

SUMMARY

- Project RECURSO was fully implemented. During the 1987-88 school year participating special education LEP students received instruction in English as a second language (E.S.L.), native language arts (N.L.A.), and content area subjects either in the students' native language or English. The project also provided staff development and parental involvement activities.

- Project RECURSO achieved the proposed objectives for mathematics, social studies, and staff development. It partially met the E.S.L. objectives. It was impossible to assess accomplishment of one of the N.L.A. objectives or the parental involvement objective. It did not meet the objectives in science, one of the N.L.A. objectives, or the objective in instrument identification.

A Title VII-funded project in its third year of operation, Project RECURSO was administered by the Board of Education's Division of Special Education (D.S.E.). RECURSO had three basic goals: to improve assessment procedures for limited English proficient (LEP) students with handicapping conditions; to improve the skills of teachers and School-Based Support Teams (S.B.S.T.s) who work with this population; and to improve the quality of interaction between these children's parents and their schools. The project provided in-service training to 410 S.B.S.T. members and 135 teachers. These staff members in turn served 308 first-through sixth-grade students in 15 schools throughout New York City.

Two teacher trainers provided classroom teachers with individual and group training on effective bilingual instructional techniques. They gave demonstration lessons, assisted teachers in developing individualized educational plans (I.E.P.s) for students, and conducted after-school workshops and summer training institutes.

Another aspect of the project was to familiarize S.B.S.T.s with new tools and strategies for assessing LEP special education students. Project RECURSO held 20 workshops for S.B.S.T. members throughout New York City.

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*This summary is based on the final evaluation of the "Project RECURSO 1987-88" prepared by the OREA Bilingual Education Evaluation Unit.

In conjunction with Project CABE, a Title VII-funded bilingual program, RECURSO sponsored a series of regionally-based parent workshops designed to familiarize parents with the policies and procedures of D.S.E. and to teach them how to help their children learn.

Students were pre- and posttested on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) and on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (C.T.B.S.). Participating students demonstrated significant gains on raw scores on the LAB and thus met part of the objective. The lack of a comparison group precluded the project from fully meeting this objective. Since students did not show a significant gain in scores on the C.T.B.S., they failed to meet the N.L.A. objective. A minimum of 70 percent of the students mastered three new skills in mathematics and social studies, meeting the proposed objectives for those areas. Although they were close (69 percent), they did not meet the 70 percent criterion in science.

Project RECURSO met its objectives for staff development for both teachers and S.B.S.T. members. It did not identify or develop assessment instruments and so failed to achieve that objective. It was not possible to evaluate the parental involvement objective because of lack of data.

Project RECURSO served 308 students in 15 sites in 1987-88 (as compared with 420 students in 17 sites in 1986-87) and increased staff by 110 S.B.S.T. members and 82 teachers. The project functioned without a project coordinator after the resignation of the coordinator in December.

A strength of Project RECURSO was its emphasis on staff development and parental involvement as a strategy to impact academic performance of LEP special education students.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendation:

- The project should carefully review the results of teacher and S.B.S.T. members' workshop evaluations to determine future presentations and participants' needs and interests.

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I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

OVERVIEW

Project RECURSO, in its third year of a four-year funding cycle, is funded under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (E.S.E.A.), and implemented by the Division of Special Education (D.S.E.). It is a transitional program for Spanish-speaking children of limited English proficiency (LEP) with handicapping conditions. RECURSO is designed to improve the skills of bilingual special education teachers and School-Based Support Teams (S.B.S.T.s) who currently work with this student population in elementary schools. In addition, Project RECURSO provides the parents of participating students with information on special education. This year it served 308 students at 15 sites throughout New York City as well as 410 S.B.S.T. members and 135 teachers. This represented a decrease of 112 students and two sites and an increase of 110 S.B.S.T. members and 82 teachers over the number served last year.

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Project RECURSO had three basic objectives: to improve the quality of assessment procedures for LEP students referred to special education; to improve the quality of instruction for special education LEP students; and to improve the quality of parent-school interaction.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) has described RECURSO's development, implementation, and outcomes for previous years in earlier final reports. For a complete description, see the 1986-87 final evaluation report.

RECURSO began its third year of operation fully staffed; however, in December 1987, the project coordinator resigned her position, and one of the teacher trainers was named acting coordinator. Since a new teacher trainer was not hired, the responsibilities of this position had to be shared by the acting coordinator and the remaining teacher trainer. A budget modification at the beginning of the year had reallocated funds for hiring outside training consultants to purchasing instructional materials and textbook, further increasing the workload of the remaining staff. The acting coordinator returned to the teacher trainer position after four months. At the time of the evaluation visits, a new project coordinator had not been identified.

Teacher Training

Two teacher trainers provided both individual and group training in bilingual instructional techniques to teachers who worked in the designated RECURSO schools. They gave demonstration lessons, assisted teachers in developing individualized instructional approaches for specific students, and conducted after-school workshops and summer institutes on instructional strategies. The teacher trainers also met

periodically with special education supervisors at each site to discuss program implementation, teacher training needs, and problems that arose during the year.

Participating teachers were entitled to tuition reimbursement for university courses to develop their skills further.

S.B.S.T. Training

The duties of the RECURSO staff were to: survey S.B.S.T.s to determine their needs in the area of bilingual testing; gather information on current testing techniques and materials; contact universities and educational publishers to locate up-to-date assessment materials and determine their suitability for New York City's student population; identify cultural issues that might have an impact on LEP special education students and their parents' ability to participate in the testing and learning process; assemble training materials for distribution to field S.B.S.T.s; and offer workshops on bilingual assessment procedures.

The training was especially designed to improve testing procedures for language-minority* and limited English proficient (L.M./LEP) students. Its purpose was to identify those students better who were language impaired rather than those who were simply LEP.

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*A language-minority student is defined as one whose home language is other than English. Such students may or may not be LEP.

Parental Involvement

In order to improve the quality of parent-school interaction, the entire RECURSO staff provided information on all aspects of special education services to the parents of participating students.

STAFF CHARACTERISTICS

Title VII funded six positions: two teacher trainers, a social worker, a school educational evaluator, and an office associate. Title VII also paid for 50 percent of the project coordinator's position. The remaining 50 percent was funded locally (Chapter I and basic tax-levy).

The project coordinator, the two teacher trainers, the social worker, and the educational evaluator all have master's degrees. All staff members had over eight years' teaching experience and bilingual abilities in Spanish.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Students in grades one through six ranged in age from eight to fourteen years. Of the 287 students for whom data were available, 112 (39 percent) were born in El Salvador, 97 (34 percent) were born in Puerto Rico, and 59 (21 percent) were born in the Dominican Republic. The remaining 19 students (six percent) were born in other Central and South American countries. Almost 60 percent of the project students have been in the United States for six or more years; less than ten percent have been in this country for two years or less.

II. EVALUATION FINDINGS: INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

OREA evaluated whether Project RECURSO accomplished its proposed objectives by examining test results and project records, interviewing school and project staff, and observing staff development activities.

Project RECURSO proposed instructional objectives in E.S.L., N.L.A., mathematics, science, and social studies.

RECURSO students were programmed into two tracks: Bilingual Instruction Services (BIS) I students attended classes in E.S.L., native language arts (N.L.A.), and content area subjects taught in the native language; BIS II students received E.S.L., N.L.A., and content area instruction in English. Some of the students attended courses in computer skills. Mainstreaming was gradual, carried out in one or two subject areas such as math or reading.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

- As a result of instruction, the mean gain of participating students in the English Listening, Reading and Writing Subtests of the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) will exceed the mean gain of the alternate placement comparison group on the same instrument.
- As a result of instruction, 70 percent of participating students will demonstrate a raw score gain in their performance on the LAB.

The first objective cannot be evaluated as proposed because a comparison group was not available. However, to assess students' achievement in English language skills, a correlated *t*-test was computed using spring 1987 and spring 1988 scores on the

LAB.* This statistical analysis determines whether the difference between pre- and posttest mean scores is significantly greater than would be expected from chance variation alone.

Since there were very few students with pre- and posttest scores on the subtests of the LAB, only total test scores are presented. Data were available for 151 students who had both pre- and posttest scores. Over 70 percent of students in all grades made statistically significant raw score gains on the LAB ($p < .05$). (See Table 1.) Project RECURSO achieved the proposed objective.

NATIVE LANGUAGE ARTS

- By June 1988, the students participating in Project RECURSO will demonstrate an improved ability to read and comprehend their native language as measured by a significant increase in the students' raw scores on The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills-Español.

Table 2 presents the raw scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (Spanish version) administered on a pre/posttest basis. Gains were not significant for any grade. An examination of the percentage of students making gains shows that only 60 percent actually improved their score. The third grade was the only grade in which every student scored higher on the posttest

*The Language Assessment Battery (LAB) was developed by the Board of Education of the City of New York to measure the English-language proficiency of nonnative speakers of English in order to determine whether their level of English proficiency is sufficient to enable them to participate effectively in classes taught in English. Students scoring below the twenty-first percentile on the LAB are entitled to bilingual and E.S.L. services.

TABLE 1

Pretest/Posttest Raw Score Differences
on the Language Assessment Battery, by Grade

Grade	Number of Students	Pretest Mean	Pretest S.D.	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	t Value	Percentage of Students Making Gains
2	8	20.6	10.6	34.6	10.1	14.0	7.2	5.54*	100
3	18	35.3	11.9	43.1	17.0	7.8	15.1	2.19*	67
4	46	35.0	12.3	45.6	14.2	10.6	12.3	5.86*	78
5	49	37.9	9.7	46.4	11.6	8.5	9.7	6.17*	78
6	23	39.7	5.6	48.8	14.0	9.1	13.7	3.19*	74
TOTAL	151"	35.7	11.2	45.1	14.0	9.4	12.1	9.54*	78

*$p < .05$.

"Total includes seven students who were missing grade level data.

- All program students for whom data were available made statistically significant raw score gains.
- The program objective that at least 70 percent of students would make raw score gains was met.

TABLE 2

Pretest/Posttest Differences on
the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (Spanish), by Grade

Grade	Number of Students	Pretest Mean	Pretest S.D.	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	Percentage of Students Making Gains
2	3	45.3	24.7	45.0	27.7	-.3	4.0	33
3	11	30.3	15.1	44.1	14.6	13.8	10.4	100
4	30	33.8	17.0	38.2	17.6	4.4	19.9	60
5	31	39.0	16.4	43.0	20.7	4.0	18.6	66
6	21	42.4	15.0	39.0	20.7	-3.4	20.9	52
Total	99*	37.4	16.2	40.7	19.1	3.3	1.9	60

*Total includes three students who were missing grade level data.

- The difference in means between pre- and posttest scores was not statistically significant for any grade level.

than on the pretest. The program did not accomplish the above objective.

- Students participating in Project RECURSO will demonstrate improved oral, writing, and listening skills in their native language as measured by teacher-made and program-developed evaluative instruments administered on a pre- and posttest basis.

OREA could not evaluate the accomplishment of this objective because no data were provided on teacher-made or program-developed instruments.

MATHEMATICS

- By June 1988, a minimum of 70 percent of the students participating in Project RECURSO will demonstrate a mastery of a minimum of three new mathematics skills as measured by tests developed for the Comprehensive Instructional Management System (CIMS).

A total of 149 students (75.3 percent) of the 198 for whom data were available mastered a minimum of three new skills, thus meeting the proposed objective. Additional analyses determined that 111 students (66 percent) mastered a number of skills equal to or above the number proposed for them, some mastered as many as 18 or 20.

SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

- By June 1988, a minimum of 70 percent of the students participating in Project RECURSO will master a minimum of three new skills consistent with the student's I.E.P. short-term objectives for science and social studies (history).

A total of 122 students of the 177 (69 percent) mastered a minimum of three new skills in science. Thus the project technically did not meet the proposed objective in science, but

it came very close. A total of 126 of the 171 students (74 percent) mastered a minimum of three new social studies skills. The program met the proposed objective in social studies.

Overall, while the project did not achieve the proposed objective in science, the data do indicate that the project students were making progress.

III. EVALUATION FINDINGS: NONINSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

RECURSO had noninstructional objectives in the areas of staff development for both teachers and S.B.S.T. members, instrument identification, and parental involvement.

Staff Development

Teacher Workshops. RECURSO proposed a single objective dealing with the workshop topics to be offered.

- By June of 1988, targeted classroom teachers will have received workshops on the development of different skill areas using the transitional bilingual instructional approach; they will have received workshops in techniques and the preparation of materials and programs appropriate for use with the LEP special education students; they will have received training in the interpretation of student assessment and evaluation data.

Project RECURSO staff conducted 22 workshops for classroom teachers of special education LEP students. Workshops were in the following areas: math-story problems; Spanish language arts instruction; establishing and managing learning centers; science activities through arts; puppetry; and cooperative learning.

An average of seven teachers attended each session. Each received an information packet containing the workshop agenda and relevant instructional material.

In addition to workshops, RECURSO staff provided individualized on-site training to classroom teachers. Its aim was to present the CALLA (cognitive language learning approach) method of teaching LEP special education students. An OREA

field consultant observed one such training session for three teachers. Throughout her lecture, the teacher trainer emphasized the importance of developing students' oral skills, particularly in the native language, as a means of moving them closer to full mainstreaming.

Project RECURSO met the objective for staff development of participating teachers.

Teachers recommended that future training include teaching reading in both English and Spanish; how to integrate arts in the content areas; science learning centers; learning activities for fourth through sixth graders; and fostering independent activity. The teachers also suggested that more time be devoted to workshops.

S.B.S.T. Workshops. RECURSO proposed one objective for the training of S.B.S.T. members.

- By June 1988, 60 percent of the targeted S.B.S.T.s will be trained in new strategies and tools available for the assessment of LEP students and in techniques required for tests using languages other than those for which it was normed.

Project RECURSO held 20 workshops for S.B.S.T.s in which new tools and strategies for assessing LEP special education students were presented. They addressed the following topics: culture and assessment; the use of a translator in bilingual assessment; language assessment; bilingual assessment; E.S.L. goals for educational evaluators; sociocultural assessment; the impact of sociocultural and linguistic factors on the assessment of LEP students; and an ecological model for assessing LEP students.

The average workshop attendance was 38 S.B.S.T. members. Project RECURSO met its objectives for the training of S.B.S.T. members.

The S.B.S.T. members' suggestions for future workshops included: how students' emotional state affects language development; methods of assessing organizational abilities through standardized tests; language assessment in Haitian Creole and Chinese; using interpreters for psychological assessment; strategies for communicating with health and welfare agencies; helping "dually limited" students; and working with family members. They felt that more time was needed to cover adequately the workshop topics. They suggested dividing the workshops according to the function of the S.B.S.T. members and meeting with administrators to discuss ways to make bilingual assessment more effective.

Participant Satisfaction with Workshops. All workshop participants were asked to evaluate the training sessions by answering seven questions using a four-point scale (1=lowest, 4=highest). They were also asked to list the strategies they had learned, whether they needed more information on the presented topic, their suggestions for future training sessions, and their comments and recommendations.

OREA received 557 completed workshop evaluation questionnaires. Of this number, 135 were from teachers and 422 were from S.B.S.T. members.

Overall, teachers and S.B.S.T. members were satisfied with the workshops. Of the teacher surveys, 94 percent indicated satisfied or very satisfied; 88 percent of the S.B.S.T. questionnaires indicated at least satisfied.

The project was also successful in increasing participants' knowledge in special education areas. Before the workshops, 53 percent of the teachers felt that they knew a great deal about the workshop topics (rating "3" or "4"). After the workshops, this figure increased to 98 percent. Similarly, only 47 percent of S.B.S.T. members felt that they were highly familiar with the subjects prior to the workshops, but after the workshops this figure increased to 86 percent.

Ninety-eight percent of the teachers and 78 percent of the S.B.S.T. members felt that the training had achieved its purpose. Both groups felt that they had gained from attending the workshops. Teachers rated all their workshops as having been useful or highly useful.

The S.B.S.T. members were more critical of the workshops and found some workshops to be more useful than others. They rated workshops on sociocultural assessment the most useful.

The teachers' rating of workshop effectiveness was similar to their rating of workshop usefulness. All of the workshops were rated as being either effective or highly effective. S.B.S.T. members' rating of workshop effectivenes was similar to their rating of workshop usefulness. They perceived sociocultural assessment to be the most effective workshop.

Teachers rated training materials for almost all the workshops as being helpful. S.B.S.T. members showed greater variety in their ratings, liking the materials for some workshops better than others.

Instrument Identification

- By the end of the third year of the project, the RECURSO S.B.S.T.s will have identified instruments which are appropriate for the assessment of LEP special education students.

The project was not able to develop the proposed guidelines this year due to the shortage of personnel that the project experienced in the spring semester. According to staff, the guidelines should be completed by September 1988.

Parental Involvement

- By June of 1987, a minimum of 60 percent of the parents of students participating in Project RECURSO will have received workshops acquainting them with:

  1. policies and procedures of the schools and the Division of Special Education;
  2. assessment procedures and the formation of the I.E.P.s (Individual Educational Plans);
  3. community resources, working with their children, etc.;
  4. developing their own English language skills.

An important facet of Project RECURSO was the participation of parents. They attended and actively took part in regular meetings, had individual conferences with teachers to discuss their children's progress, visited classrooms on a regular basis, were actively involved in the evaluation process, and

participated in regular workshop sessions designed to improve skills in facilitating their children's progress in the project.

Project RECURSO cosponsored parent workshops in conjunction with Project CABE, a Title VII-funded bilingual program. Teachers at project sites were informed by their supervisors of upcoming parent meetings and sent notices home to parents. Although the project provided parents with transportation tokens to encourage their participation in these activities, attendance was low.

Accomplishment of the objective cannot be evaluated as proposed, because the program did not provide OREA with the number of parents who attended each workshop. Based on observations, however, it appeared that Project RECURSO was successful in facilitating parental involvement.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The program met its objectives in teacher training. Teachers attended 22 workshops on effective instructional strategies. The program also met its objectives for S.B.S.T. training. S.B.S.T. members attended 20 workshops during which language and cultural issues were addressed.

Results of workshop evaluation questionnaires revealed that both the teachers and the S.B.S.T. members were highly satisfied with the workshops.

The project could not complete proposed guidelines for S.B.S.T. members to use in assessing LEP special education students due to the shortage of personnel in the spring semester.

While attendance was usually low, parents of RECURSO students attended workshops on rights as parents of LEP special education students, the assessment process, and how to work with the system. Numbers were not available, but the project did facilitate parental participation in their children's education and assisted parents in becoming familiar with the system. The project proposed that its staff training and parental involvement components would have an impact on the academic performance of LEP special education students. It appears that this strategy was effective.

RECURSO students were able to meet the proposed objectives in the areas of English language skills, native language skills,

mathematics, and social studies. Students did not meet the proposed objective in science but came very close, showing progress in that area.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation lead to the folowing recommendation:

- The project should carefully review the results of teacher and S.B.S.T. members' workshop evaluations to determine future presentations and participants' needs and interests.